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Comments In Writing

If you would like to submit comments in writing, you may mail them to:

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Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley

Alignment Study



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Project Update

Project Background

The Idaho 55 – Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Alignment Study began in late 1999. The study has three essential elements: environmental studies, engineering evaluations and public involvement. Because of the potential for significant environmental impacts, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for the project. With public input, the transportation department has identified issues, developed options and evaluated alternatives. Based on the results of the public participation and recommendations from state and federal agencies, six alternatives are being evaluated in the draft EIS:

- Not to build anything.
- Improve the existing highway at a 40 mile per hour design speed.
- Improve the existing highway at a 50 mile per hour design speed.
- Construct a new highway on the west side of the existing highway.
- Two alternatives that would construct a new highway on the east side of the existing highway. (refer to map on page 4).

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Study Goals

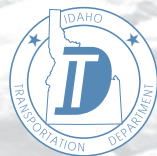
Identify issues

Identify regulatory barriers

Develop options

Select desired options

Fall 2002



What has happened since the last public workshop?

The last public workshop was held in September 2001. There were 55 individuals that attended and 46 written comments were received. Most of the people that attended the workshop agreed that the existing highway should be improved, but there was not a consensus on which alternative to choose. All of the alternatives received some support, but none of the alternatives received significantly more support than the others.

Since the public workshop, project officials have been working to complete the draft EIS. The draft EIS is a document that provides a detailed explanation of the proposed project, a description of the existing environment and an analysis of the anticipated impacts of the alternatives being evaluated. This effort requires on-going coordination with many federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Idaho State Historical Society's Historic Preservation Office.

In order to complete the draft EIS, project officials have worked on several tasks over the past year. They include:

- Writing and reviewing the preliminary draft EIS.
- Studying potential impacts to endangered species, wetlands, archeological sites, recreation areas, land use, traffic, noise, aesthetics, homes and businesses.
- Identifying strategies to reduce impacts.
- Completing an evaluation of the geologic features and how they would affect construction of each alternative.

What are we doing now?

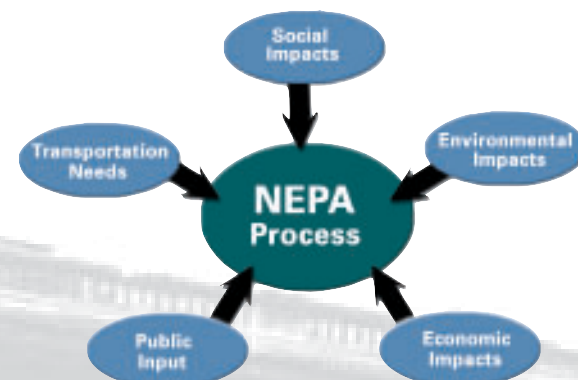
- Collecting supplemental field data needed to address comments from state, federal and local agencies and the public.
- Surveying to verify existing right-of-way and property boundaries along each alternative.

What's Next?

This fall, the detailed environmental surveys will be completed. Project officials will use the data collected to complete the draft EIS, which will then be reviewed by government agencies. In early 2003 an informational meeting will be held. The purpose of the meeting will be to inform the public about the progress of the EIS and to share results of the environmental surveys. Later in the year the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will publish the draft EIS for public review, and a public hearing will be held. Data collected on each of the alternatives will be included in the draft EIS. The public hearing will be held about a month after the publication date.

Information about the informational meeting and the public hearing will be placed in area newspapers and notification will be sent to everyone on the project mailing list. Comments on the draft EIS received at the public hearing and in writing will be addressed in the final EIS. At that time, the transportation department and the FHWA will select the preferred alternative. The selection of the preferred alternative will be documented in the final EIS.

Where Do I Fit In?



Social, environmental and economic impacts balanced with transportation needs and public input help shape the decisions and outcomes under NEPA.

Public Agency Input Group

The Public Agency Input Group is made up of state and federal regulatory agencies. Its function is to identify issues, concerns and regulations related to the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project. The group also plays an important role in deciding which options should be carried forward and in selecting the preferred alternative.

Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team

The Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team is a group of citizens and local officials that represent the interests and concerns of environmental associations, recreational groups, businesses, neighborhoods, and property owners that could be affected by the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project.

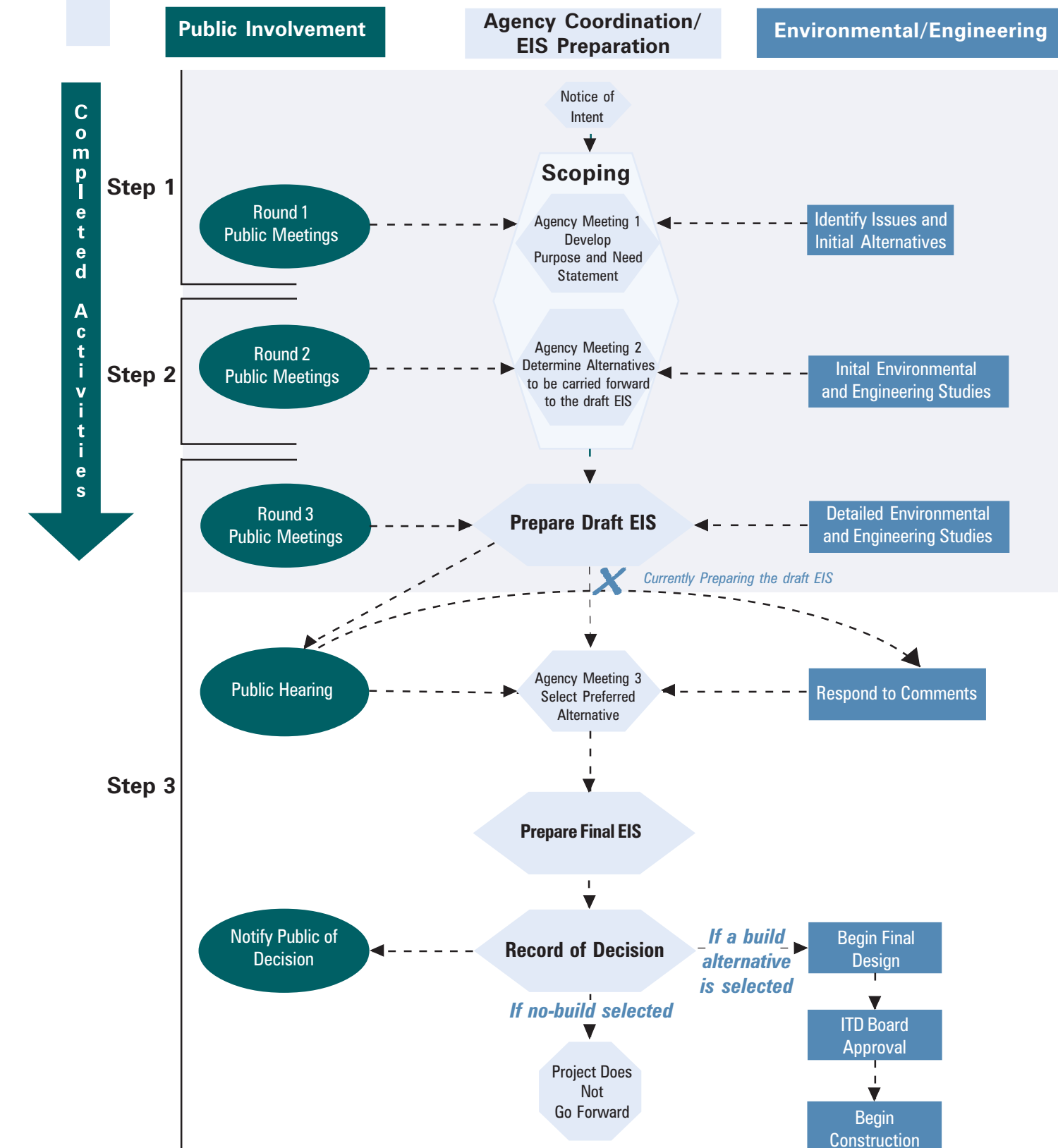
The team has helped identify issues, brainstorm options and recommend options to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement. It is made up of a cross-section of interested citizens from various social and economic groups within the project area.

General Public

The public has been invited to participate in the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley workshops. Participants at the first workshop helped the transportation department identify project-related issues and developed options. During the second workshop, the public helped determine which options should be carried forward for further study. During the third workshop, the public was asked to recommend its desired option. A public hearing will be held once the draft EIS is complete.

The Process

The NEPA/Section 404 Merger Process



Glossary

Notice of Intent - The Notice of Intent is prepared for publication in the *Federal Register*, a daily legal newspaper that contains federal agency regulations. The Notice of Intent announces to the public and interested agencies that a project is being developed and that an EIS will be prepared.

Scoping - The formal coordination process required by the NEPA process to assist in determining the scope of the project and the major issues related to the proposed action.

Record of Decision - The Record of Decision is issued by the Federal Highway Administration. It allows an agency, like the transportation department, to proceed to final design and construction.